

Optimism: 'Expecting a Good Future'

These are 3 things you could do to use optimism as a strategy to become happier:

1. Take 20 minutes to visualize your ideal future, in different domains of life (work, love, health etc) and write this down. This is an enjoyable exercise and it works as a motivator to achieve this future. Because writing is a structured activity, which is bound by rules, you are forced to order, streamline and analyze your thoughts in a way that we cannot achieve when we only think about something.
2. Keep a logbook about your goals and sub-goals. What are your long-term goals? And which sub-goals do you need to achieve in order to reach these long-term goals? When you come across pessimistic thoughts, think about alternative scenarios or possible solutions.
3. Determine your 'obstacle thoughts'. Think about which pessimistic thoughts automatically come to mind. Try to change that thought into a more positive version. Think about what you can learn from situations and whether or not something good might come out of them.

Being optimistic is not the same as not looking at the negative side of things. Optimistic people turn out to be more aware of risks and threats, but they realize that outcomes are dependent on their effort. It is about choosing how you want to see and approach the world.

There is a difference between 'small optimism' (my train will leave on time) and 'big optimism' (our society is on the verge of a revolution). Both lead to more happiness, but in different ways. Small optimism makes people behave in constructive, healthy ways in different situations (by finishing a project or studying for a test). Big optimism gives you a sense of power, it makes you resilient, strong and energetic.

These are some of the reasons why optimism makes people happier:

1. When you are optimistic, you trust that you will reach your life's goals. This helps you to actually achieve them.
2. Optimistic people do not give up.
3. Optimism stimulates us to approach life actively and effectively.
4. Optimism leads to positive emotions.